

Testimony of State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

February 19, 2002

Thank you, Chairperson Olsen and members of the Assembly Education Committee. It is a privilege to join you today with my colleagues, President Lyall and President Wegenke. I also am pleased to be accompanied by DPI staff responsible for implementing PI 34, the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative— Assistant State Superintendent Jack Kean, Dr. Peter Burke, and Kathryn Lind—as well as the chairperson of the Professional Standards Council, Bill Hartje.

The Assembly Education Committee is comprised of individuals with records of leadership, service, and accomplishment. The background of committee members is most impressive.

- Not only do we have a number of members with records of service on local school boards (Olsen, Kestell, Loeffelholz, Sinicki), we have two members with extended records of service—21 years in one case (9 as president, Olsen) and 15 in another (Kestell). We also have two former educators (Rhoades, Lehman).
- We have members who have served on city councils (Nass, Ziegelbauer) and those who have applied their talents to county government (Hahn).
- We even have a former town assessor (Hahn) and a former finance director for a city government (Ziegelbauer).
- The committee has members who have served on library boards (Townsend), the boards of health-care institutions, and various important community organizations, such as parent-teacher associations (Sinicki), chambers of commerce, and YMCA (Rhoades, Riley).
- We have those with connections to agriculture, small business, manufacturing, higher education (Nass), and the State Bar (Sherman).

We have a tremendously talented committee with the experience and values that reflect all that is good in Wisconsin.

I am proud to be here today on behalf of the people of Wisconsin as State Superintendent of Public Instruction. I am excited at the opportunity to work with you as the chief advocate for our children and PK-12 education.

The three of us come before you in the spirit of partnership and collaboration, guided by our shared responsibility as leaders to provide a bright future for our most precious resource, our children.

We are committed to actively serving the children and the schools of our state by working collaboratively with the legislature to ensure that Wisconsin students have the skills and knowledge they need to compete and win in the new knowledge-based economy. Our New Wisconsin Promise ensures quality education for all Wisconsin children.

The best way we can assure our children are prepared is to make a commitment to investing in quality professionals in every school. Our students deserve nothing less.

In 1999, the state legislature showed great vision and foresight in approving the PI 34 framework for a new approach to educator licensing. The emphasis is now on student learning and standards of quality, and this is a fundamental change.

Research clearly shows—and every parent can tell you—that the most important factor in influencing student achievement is the quality of the teacher. And the most important factor for an effective school is strong leadership. The new federal No Child Left Behind Act reinforces the value of a quality teacher in every classroom.

The legislature did the right thing in recognizing the importance of Wisconsin's quality educator initiative, and a great deal of good work has taken us down the path of accomplishing our goals.

The Department of Public Instruction and the Professional Standards Council have worked diligently over the past two years to create implementation models for PI 34 that are flexible and affordable for local school districts and initiate reform that will produce results.

In the area of recruitment and alternative certification:

- An alternative certification process and the criteria for review have been developed and are being piloted with six institutions of higher education (UW-Parkside, Viterbo, UW-Milwaukee (MTEC), Concordia, Lakeland, and Silver Lake).
- A recruitment plan to encourage students to consider the education profession has been designed and must be put in place to fully implement this portion of PI 34.

In the area of program approval and assessment:

- A program approval process and the standards for review have been developed.

- Eight institutions of higher education will pilot the review process this year. (Done: Lakeland College, UW-Whitewater, Alverno College, UW-Madison; still to do: Cardinal Stritch University, Marian College, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Superior.)

In the area of content guidelines:

- Content guidelines have been developed for license program areas.
- Educational Testing Services has been selected to develop the content exam.
- Panels of teachers and professors are being assembled for test validation and score setting.

In the area of initial educators:

- A mentor training curriculum based on the ten Wisconsin Standards for Teaching has been developed and conducted with over 500 classroom teachers. Revisions are being made based on the evaluation from training held in August 2001.
- A draft of a design handbook for mentoring programs has been developed.

In the area of professional development teams:

- A professional plan and the criteria for review have been developed and are currently being piloted in several districts, including Milwaukee and Shawano.

In the area of master educators:

- Components for the Wisconsin master educator license have been developed.

In the area of administrator licensure:

- Performance-based standards have been developed.
- Guidelines and criteria for the professional development plan have been developed.
- A handbook of guidelines for the initial educator programs for administrators is being developed.

The Professional Standards Council has played a significant role in the progress of PI 34 and will continue to provide the focus and direction needed to accomplish our goal of providing quality teachers in every classroom.

- The PSC is a sounding board for information coming from the work groups. Each work group has a PSC liaison member, so the PSC is well informed about the progress, and I have been meeting personally with them.
- The PSC provides recommendations for language changes, because members have a background in the rules and will continue with the recommendations after the work groups have completed their tasks.
- The PSC is able to complete specific tasks assigned by the state superintendent, such as the content test evaluation, and will continue in this capacity for test validation and score setting.
- The PSC has reviewed two alternative license programs and will be part of future reviews of these programs.

We are on the right track. Not only will this initiative ensure the quality of teachers and administrators, it also will provide our students with the greatest opportunities for achievement and success.

We know that quality education can lead us to the future economic success and security of our state. We must have the fiscal discipline to make the right long-term investments in education to ensure our economic future.

PI 34, because of your vision, is heading us in the right direction. Parents and citizens expect a quality teacher in every classroom.

The challenge now before the state of Wisconsin is to raise the level of achievement for all students. Our responsibility is clear: We must recruit individuals to serve the children of Wisconsin, provide a rigorous preparation program, mentor new educators, and support educators throughout their professional career.

Thank you. I now turn to President Lyall.